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February 14, 2008

**News Release from FEMA:**

**WASHINGTON** - The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced today its intent to expedite the agency's plan to provide for the safety and well being of residents living in FEMA provided temporary housing units. The re-doubling of efforts come amid preliminary findings from formaldehyde testing of temporary housing units in the Gulf Coast conducted for the agency by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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"As a result of preliminary findings FEMA will be taking additional actions to provide for the safety and well being of the residents of these travel trailers by finding them alternative housing," said FEMA Administrator David Paulison said. "FEMA is leaning forward and will continue to act and to provide information to our residents in an expedited manner."

FEMA is taking steps to expedite the relocation of residents from temporary housing units to apartments or other alternative housing such as hotels, motels, and "Katrina cottages."

As part of the relocation system currently in place, and its expansion, FEMA will carry out the following actions where necessary:

- Enter in to direct contracts with hotels in order to obtain the needed hotel/motel capacity.
- Utilize contract resources to support local relocation.
- Provide food vouchers and stipends.
- Enter into direct lease agreements with landlords.
- Contract for temporary storage and/or shipping of household property.
- Contract for the boarding and care of household pets for families relocated to hotels or apartments that don't allow pets.
- Provide furniture for rental units by working with Voluntary Agencies where possible, and will purchase the furniture when necessary.
- Contract for moving teams and equipment to assist in the movement of households with special medical needs.
- Provide additional staff to our offices on the ground to facilitate and manage the expedited

relocation of households.

The priority in relocation will be those occupants expressing a health concern and those most susceptible to health risk such as the elderly, households with young children and those with respiratory challenges. FEMA previously announced a plan to close all group sites and relocate residents by June 1 of this year and will continue this activity as part of our ongoing efforts.

In providing proper health information to residents, FEMA will coordinate with CDC to provide occupants with additional public health information. Specifically, CDC and FEMA teams will also visit "each" of the 519 CDC tested units to provide occupants with the specific results for their home and advise them on a course of action.

In addition, FEMA will provide caseworker assistance to occupants to ensure best access to information and programs that can lead to self sufficiency and a sustainable future.

The indoor air quality assessment is one of several actions CDC has initiated to assist FEMA in protecting the health of temporary housing residents. The other public health activities include:

- Reconvening a panel of experts to identify and advise on health issues that could be associated with long-term residence in temporary housing units, such as travel trailers.
- Assessing formaldehyde levels across different models and types of unoccupied trailers to identify the factors that reduce or heighten those levels. This assessment also involves identifying cost-effective ways to reduce or lower formaldehyde levels and concentrations in temporary housing environments. This series of tests includes conducting an emissions study of building materials in conjunction with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.
- Conducting a study that looks at the health of children currently living in trailers along with a long-term study of children born while their families resided in FEMA trailers and mobile homes in Mississippi and Louisiana.
- Providing educational materials and information to trailer residents about the CDC studies as well as steps that can be taken to improve indoor air quality.

The two agencies have established toll-free hotlines to respond to public inquiries. **FEMA employees are available to discuss housing concerns at 1-866-562-2381, or TTY 1-800-462-7585. CDC specialists will respond to health-related concerns at 1-800-CDC-INFO.**

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